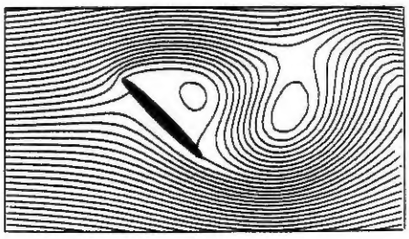
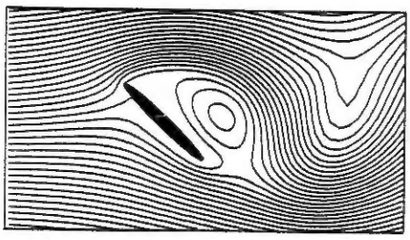
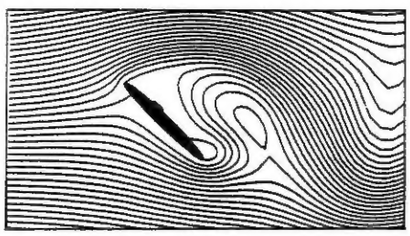
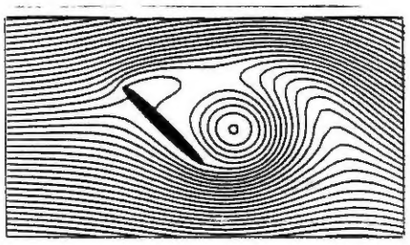
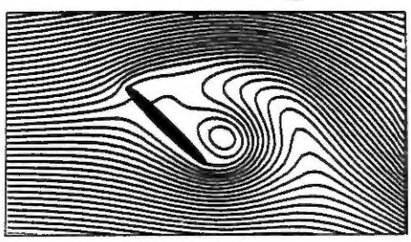
CHEAP TRUTH 44











SF WRITER EATS OWN FOOT TO SURVIVE!

Sci-fi writer Russell M. Griffin, after a succession of publisher poorly-marketed novels, each from a less successful than the one before it, last week devoured his own foot in order to stay alive. Griffin was unavailable for comment, but our sources conjectured, "How else is the poor b*st*rd supposed to live? Not on the piece-of-sh*t advances these people pay!"

What brought Griffin to this end? Inquiring minds want to know.

The seeds are visible in his first novel, THE MAKESHIFT GOD (Dell, 1979). Obviously some sort of effete intellectual snob, Griffin packs an otherwise well-written and fast-paced space adventure with all sorts of literary references and dead languages.

It is in CENTURY'S END (Bantam, 1981), however, that Griffin begins to blatantly show his true colors. Not only does he mock organized religion, flying saucers (!), and politicians, he has a whole sci-fi novel with no time machines, space ships, or aliens. What's the point?

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT (Timescape, 1982) isn't even set in the future, for cripe's sake, and not only are there no aliens and no space ships, the origin of the story's Elephant Man is so disgusting we dare not print it in a family newsmagazine!

THE TIME SERVERS (Avon, 1985) starts off promisingly enough, set in an embassy on an alien planet, a situation we are told resembles the "Retief" stories by fellow sci-fi'er Keith Laumer. But in the end Griffin resorts to sly accusations about the Vietnam War, and we know no one wants to hear about Vietnam any more.

These reasons all seemed sufficient to explain Griffin's lack of popularity. Still, because inquiring minds like yours want to know, we contacted Prominent Literary Critic SUE DENIM and asked her opinion on Griffin's work.

"I think the guy's a genius, but for God's sake don't quote me. Obviously the guy has f*ck*d up big somewhere to get his stuff buried like this. I mean, he should be getting hardcover deals and high five-figure advances and every award in the field.

"Take CENTURY'S END. Please. Apparently nobody noticed that this was the first really visionary book about the coming millenium. It's going to be crazy, and Griffin is the only writer I know of (other than maybe Jim Blaylock or Phil Dick -- and Dick wasn't as funny) who is good enough at both humor and pathos to really bring the craziness of it to life. In the next 15 years, we're going to see pale imitations of this book make the best seller list. You'll see.

"THE BLIND MAN AND THE ELEPHANT is cripplingly funny, the characters are so vivid and so fully realized that you forget you met them in a book, Griffin seems a complete expert in every field he even touches on, and the moral issues he raises are always complex and important. The book is about the news media, but more about taking responsibility for your actions -- the Elephant Man being a living symbol of Consequences.

"You almost feel guilty about laughing at THE TIME SERVERS because it's so brutal, but when you find out who the Depazians really are, when the whole Vietnam parallel starts taking shape, you just want to laugh and cry and jump up and down all at the same time.

"But obviously I'm not supposed to talk about this, or somebody else would already have been singing Griffin's praises. He's that good. So forget I even said anything, OK? And if you print a word of this I'll sue your *ss off."

THE TIME SERVERS is still available in a lot of bookstores, but the rest of Griffin's books are of course out of print. Sci-fi, as we all know, is meant to be cheap, lightweight, and disposable -- rather like a butane lighter -- and is not meant to appeal to Prominent Literary Critics. Inquiring minds don't need them.

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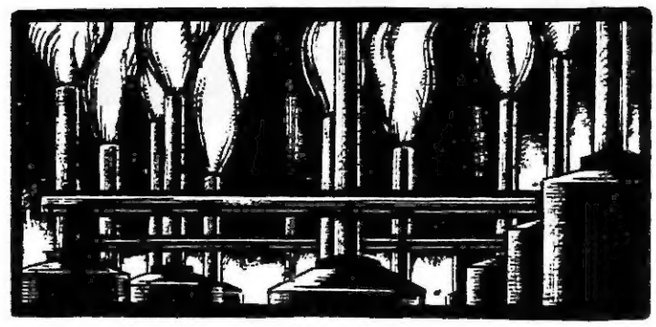
Vincent Omniaveritas, editing. Todd Refinery, graphics. "Where Mutation Is the Norm"

CHEAP TRUTH Raymond Chandler Interview



It was late March, 1985, two years since our CHEAP TRUTH Lovecraft interview (see CT3). Once again we used the unspeakable necromancy of the Cross Plains Dairy Queen.

Arriving from 1957, Raymond Chandler appeared in the CHEAP TRUTH offices as a small, silver-haired gentleman with a round, dignified face and round tortoiseshell glasses. He wore an ivory linen suit, a striped bow-tie, exquisite two-tone shoes and long yellow cotton gloves.

RC: (flopping onto couch) I've always been a horizontal thinker. (Frowns at television) What the hell is that?
CT: It's MTV.
RC: You have a blabb-off? (Seizes remote control.) I had one of these before they were even on the market. (Kills the sound.) Modern Americans. Jesus. Clustered around TVs like flies on garbage.
CT: Thanks for coming by, Mr. Chandler.
RC: Call me Ray, I hate snobbery.
CT: Fine, Ray. How about some hot tea?
RC: (irritably) A Ballantine's on the rocks. (sips) No doubt you want to know how a fellow like me got into this stinking mess.
CT: Actually, I --
RC: I began as a businessman. Worked for an oil company. That gave me a grasp of real life -- not like those lace-pantied fakers for the slicks. And I worked at my writing. Other pulp writers used buckets of whitewash, I used a camel's-hair brush.
CT: How'd you reconcile that with the lousy pay scales of BLACK MASK and DIME DETECTIVE magazines?
RC: I wrote film scripts for Tinseltown, too.
CT: And how did that work out?
RC: It was agony! You had no artistic control. Publishers are sick kittens compared to the moguls. And the agents! Jesus! (grimaces) Take my rewrite for THE BLUE DAHLIA. They were shooting from my script as I wrote it. Had to write it drunk. The only way I could get it done in time. I wrote around the clock and had two nurses and a doctor giving me vitamin shots.
CT: Why'd you let them put you through all that, Ray?
RC: A man has to eat! (Shrugs) Besides, there was the gardener, the cook... seaside house in La Jolla... eighteen pairs of shoes... it adds up!
CT: Let's talk about your books, Ray. The mainstream is always tough on genre writers.
RC: Sure. Till you're a success. Then it's worse. You're halfway through a Marlowe story, cracking wise from the corner of your mouth, and along comes W. H. Auden and tells you you're writing "serious studies of a criminal milieu." Then you freeze up, and it takes two or three gimlets to thaw you out again. And then there's the mystery hacks, envious pipsqueaks knifing your back. Or the goddamn Saturday Review of Literature -- a bunch of out-at-elbows professors mewling at everyone who has the brain and guts to make a dime!
CT: You were a critic's darling.
RC: In Britain, maybe. The British know good writing. To them I was a major American author -- not just a mystery writer. And the British have a code of honor. The women make you say "please" five times before you can sleep with them.
CT: You don't say....
RC: I love the way they talk. A writer has to know how to listen to dialogue, dammit! Nobody listens now -- except to these damn squawkboxes. (Stares gloomily at silent video) Look at that twist capering. They put whores on television these days? No wonder the West is going to hell.
CT: Uh, yeah. Now, Ray, about your treatment of women --
RC: But a man does his best. I know I did. I took a cheap, shoddy, and utterly lost kind of writing, and made it into something that intellectuals claw each other about.
CT: Right! There's your real legacy, Ray. The promise that genre writing, done from the heart, can break its own limits and really last. There's a camaraderie among pop writers. We science fiction writers should --
RC: You what? (laughs wildly) I read that sci-fi crap once! "I cocked the timejector in secondary and waded through the bright blue manda grass. My breath froze into pink pretzels...." (dabs at tears of laughter) You call that writing? Jesus Christ --
(Chandler falls silent and winks out with a crackle of static. God bless the remote control!)